

GRAND ISLE SUPERVISORY UNION

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802-372-6921 • P.O. BOX 54, GRAND ISLE, VT 05458 • WWW.GISU.ORG

18 November 2020

Dear Parents, Guardians & Community members,

As we get closer to the Thanksgiving break I want to share my thanks to the community for all of the support you have for education and educators. I am thankful for being able to work in such a great community.

I do also want to call your attention to the updated executive order from Governor Scott. The order indicates: "Attendance at all public and private social, recreational and entertainment gatherings, indoor and outdoor, including large social gatherings incidental to ceremonies, holiday gatherings, parties and celebrations, shall be limited to participation with only members of a single household." I know how disappointing this is. My family has created a Pod with two other households and had planned to have a Thanksgiving dinner together. Based on the adjusted order we have now shifted the plans to get together virtually. I hope everyone stays safe over the break and in doing so helps keep the schools safe for when we return after the break.

I do also want to let you know that we are experiencing a real substitute shortage in the Islands. Over the last two weeks we have come close to having to move classes to remote instruction in certain situations. We actually did move a class to remote for one day at the North Hero School Campus because of an inability to cover the classroom. We are doing everything we can to stay with in-person learning including having teachers and support staff covering each other when we can not get a substitute. In most of the schools, the Principals have also even had to serve as substitute teachers on really challenging days. I share this with the community for three reasons: First I want to thank all the faculty, staff, and administrators for supporting each other. Secondly I want the community to know that we really are on the brink of not being able to have the staffing to safely continue to operate as we are without interruption. Finally if anyone is interested in becoming a substitute teacher I encourage you to reach out to Megan DeVinny our HR Coordinator at mdevinny@gisu.org.

As of today neither of the two cases of COVID-19 in GISU Schools I wrote about last week have resulted in additional cases in the schools. This is good news; this likely indicates the routines, procedures and practices we have implemented to prevent transmission in the schools are working. Emily Dousevitz, the District Nurse, and I successfully ran four surveillance testing clinics in four different buildings with the support of the health assistants (Thank you Kim Fitzgerald, Julie Elkins, and Jenny Brownell) at each site on Monday. Everyone who participated was grateful and expressed appreciation as well as a sense of comfort that we were participating. The VT Agency of Education was a solid partner in helping pull this off. The Vermont Department of Health, Agency of Transportation and the National guard also really came through. We tested 91 faculty and staff members which is more than 50% of faculty and staff. Overall the project was a great success.

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According to the [Vermont Department of Health's School Based COVID-19 website](#) there were 19 new cases of COVID-19 in Vermont schools last week. Overall there have been a total of 74 confirmed cases in Vermont schools.

[The State of Vermont has suspended its leisure travel map and implemented a mandatory quarantine for anyone returning or traveling to Vermont.](#)

Reminder:

The GISU Member School Districts have received very few applications for Free and Reduced meals. Based on a waiver from the USDA that allows all families to receive free meals for all of the 2020-2021 school year. Despite this, it is imperative that if families think they may qualify for free or reduced meals they complete an application. In addition to receiving meals, our free and reduced membership has an impact on grants we are eligible to apply for and receive. If you have any questions about if you qualify for Free or Reduced lunches please reach out directly to your local school who can provide you with information and an application. We know families are very busy and we thank you in advance for your help with this. **If you haven't done so already please take some time over the Thanksgiving break to complete and return the form.**

A Note from our GISU Counselors

Hello GISU School Community!

Greetings from your GISU School Counselors! We are thrilled to provide our students and families with a quarterly newsletter with social and emotional learning updates as well as tips for our local school communities. Please click this link for our newsletter: [GISU Counselor Corner](#)

Community Meeting

Tonight's Community Meeting will review where we are now and will urge people to be safe over the holiday break and after. As usual, there will be a time for community members to ask questions and share their experiences. The access to the Superintendent's weekly Community Meeting is available below. Please note there will not be a Community Meeting or letter on November 25, 2020. I hope everyone has an enjoyable and safe Thanksgiving.

Wednesday, November 18, 2020, 6:00 p.m.

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(US) +1 573-349-3062 PIN: 810 989 343#

**Please note tonight's Community meeting will be recorded and posted to the COVID 19 communications section of the GISU website

Thank you for working with us to support the GISU mission to ensure all members of the Grand Isle Supervisory Union Learning Community are curious, creative, courageous, and capable of pursuing their aspirations in a diverse and ever-changing world.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Clark

Michael J. Clark
Grand Isle Supervisory Union
Superintendent